

PART VI

Livestock, Dairying and Poultry

General Importance

Dairying and poultry raising are the main farming activities of King County. In the last Census of Agriculture in 1954, dairy farms numbered 686 and poultry 455. There are more poultry farms here than in any other Washington county and King was the forty-third county in the United States in 1954 in sales of poultry products. A total of 1,300 or 25 percent of all the farms, raise or depend mainly on livestock and poultry. The value of all animals and animal products marketed by farmers in 1954 was \$12,014,745 compared with \$5,536,051 received for all crops. Dairy products alone made up over 38 percent of farm commercial sales in 1954. King was second to Whatcom in total value of milk and butterfat sold by farmers in 1954 and was ninetieth among all American dairy counties.

Livestock Trends

Measured in number and type of animals, livestock raising has changed considerably since 1920. The value of livestock in 1950 was greater than in 1920,

Total Value of King County Livestock: \$6,038,011

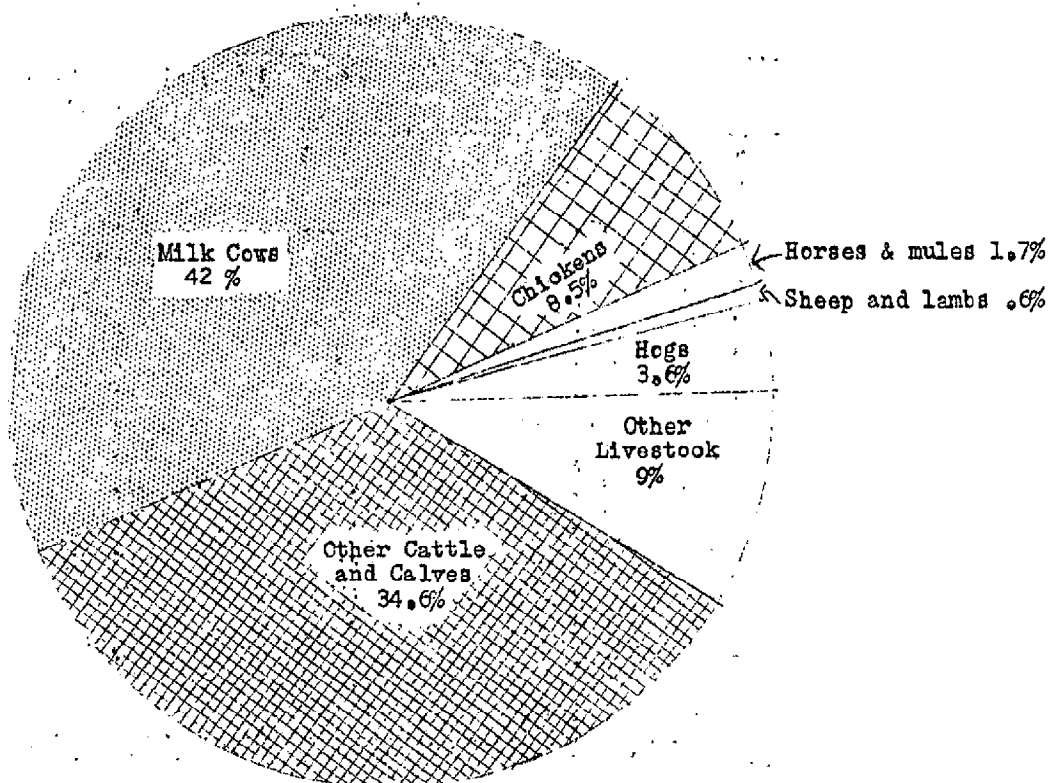


Figure 10.- Value of Livestock on Farms
King County, 1950.
(Based on U.S. Census, Agriculture)

\$4,458,606 in 1920 and \$5,524,873 in 1950. All cattle on farms increased from 36,000 head in 1939 to 51,800 in 1956. Beef cattle have increased greatly as a sideline or specialty on livestock farms since 1945. Since 1920 there has also been a considerable drop in numbers of horses, sheep and swine. General livestock farming has changed more to specialized dairy and poultry farming. Poultry raising has expanded the most proportionately in numbers of chickens and turkeys kept on farms and in the volume of eggs marketed.

Cattle: Dairy and Beef Farming

Dairy and beef cattle are major sources of farm income in King County and make up a large part of the assessed value of farm property. Cattle are kept on 3,900 or about four-fifths of all the farms. In the last census enumeration cattle accounted for 76.6 percent of the value of all livestock. Milk cows, based on an average of \$123 per animal in 1950, were valued at about \$2,546,100 or 42 percent of the total value of all livestock. Milk cows and dairy cattle reached their highest numbers near the end of World War II in 1945 when fluid milk markets in the Puget Sound area were at a high-demand point. From 1946 to 1952 dairy cattle declined but began to increase again in 1956. The county has consistently held a high position in Washington dairying because of its good marketing location. Second only to Whatcom county, dairymen of King County sold \$6,610,254 worth of fluid milk and butterfat to distributors and processors in 1954.

Table 27.- Cattle on Farms
King County, 1939-1956

Year	All Cattle (head)	Beef Cattle 1/ (head)	Dairy Cattle (head)
1939	36,000	500	35,500
1940	36,700	500	36,200
1941	36,600	500	36,100
1942	38,000	600	37,400
1943	40,600	700	39,900
1944	41,500	500	41,000
1945	41,500	700	40,800
1946	39,200	600	38,600
1947	37,900	600	37,300
1948	37,300	600	36,700
1949	38,200	1,200	37,000
1950	38,200	1,400	36,800
1951	38,900	3,300	35,600
1952	38,900	5,400	33,500
1953	43,600	8,600	35,000
1954	48,500	10,800	37,700
1955	50,800	11,700	39,100
1956	51,800	11,400	40,400

1/ Beef cattle includes some calves for vealers and dairy type steers.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, AMS, Agric.
Estimates, State of Washington, 1939-1956.

Recently increased emphasis on raising beef cattle or marketing dairy cattle as beef animals has been a noticeable feature of the livestock industry. Beef cattle started increasing during 1949 because of favorable beef prices. Military markets for beef created by the Korean conflict and lower milk prices were some of the causes. Other factors were the smaller investment in equipment necessary to produce beef compared to fluid milk, and the fewer hours of labor required compared to dairying. Many King County farmers following part-time industrial work adopted this labor saving practice. Beef breeds are efficient users of grasslands, woodland pastures and cut-over land browse common to the hilly and upland districts. New farmers often start with beef cattle instead of dairy stock. Cattle raised for beef were estimated at 11,400 in 1955, the highest number estimated since 1939.

Poultry Farming

King County is the number one poultry county of Washington, and was forty-third in the nation in 1954. In dollar value of products sold from farms, poultry raising is the second major type of farming in this area. Sales of eggs, broilers, other meat chickens, turkeys and other poultry returned an estimated \$3,874,566 to King County farmers in 1954. In that year King was ahead of other counties in sales of broilers and chickens for fresh meat markets but

Total Value of Poultry and Poultry Products Sold
in 1954 - \$3,874,566

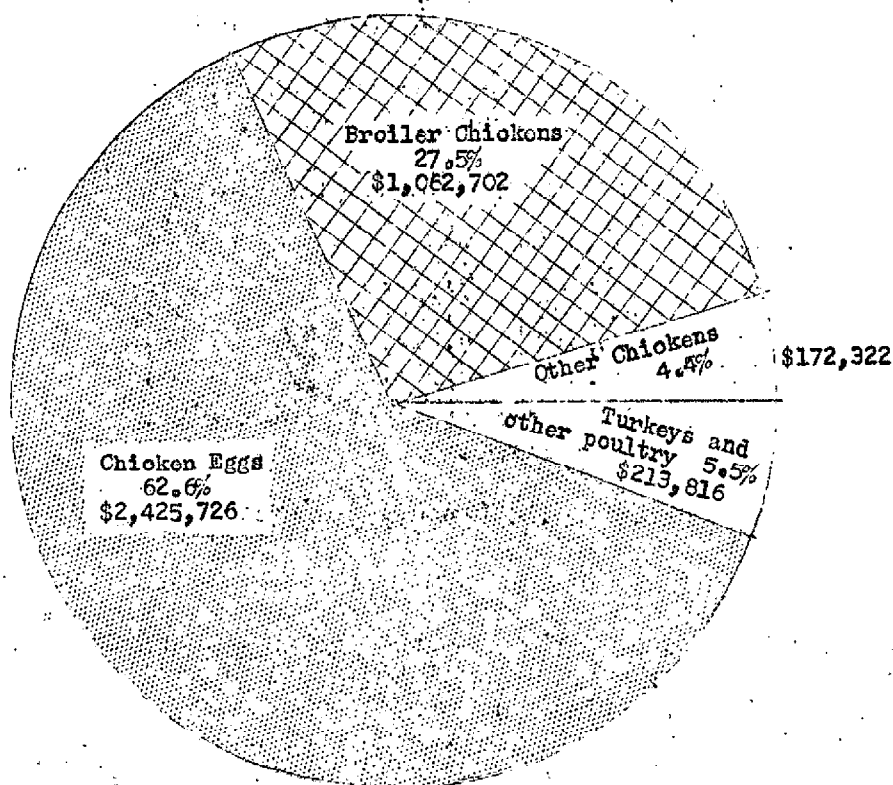


Figure 11.- Divisions of King County Poultry Industry
By Products Sold off Farms in 1954.
(Based on U.S. Census, Agriculture)

was second to Whatcom County in sales of eggs. The number of chickens kept on hand for egg production has ranged between 410,000 and 591,000 birds in recent years. Egg production has varied between 4,000,000 and 6,500,000 dozen per year. Chickens on farms reached a low of 410,510 in 1950 when 4,212,568 dozen eggs were sold. The 1945 Census, showing the strong World War II market influence, recorded a peak of 6,658,000 dozen eggs sold. Produced widely on many small farms and as a sideline on various larger operations, eggs are sold off about 1,075 farms.

King County poultrymen lead the state in producing and selling broilers (fryer chickens). In 1954 there were 78 producers who sold a total of 1,397,000 fryer chickens for the fresh and frozen-pack market in the Seattle-Tacoma urban area. This volume was 335,000 birds greater than in 1949. Broiler sales have accounted for over one-fourth the entire business of the poultry farming industry in recent years.

Turkey raising has declined in importance since its peak years during World War II. During the war over 50,000 turkeys were raised for market each year. By 1954 production was about 31,000 annually. Most of the turkeys raised are heavy breeds for the holiday market. About 115 farms raise turkeys for the market and 40 farms specialize in turkey breeding stock, eggs and poult.

Miscellaneous poultry raising and marketing including ducks and geese is a larger industry in King County than elsewhere in the state. About 350 farms near Seattle raise ducks and about 6,000 ducks are marketed in the city each year. Several farms market ducks and geese directly to consumers.

Table 28.- Chickens, Egg Production, Turkeys
King County, 1939-1954.

Year	Chickens (birds)	Egg Production (dozens)	Turkeys Raised (birds)
1939	591,492	6,400,102	20,561
1944	582,198	6,658,028	54,318
1949	410,510	4,212,568 $\frac{1}{2}$	48,402
1954	583,364	5,963,002 $\frac{1}{2}$	31,666

$\frac{1}{2}$ Eggs sold by farmers; does not include eggs consumed on farms.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Hogs

King County is one of the important areas of Washington in the raising and marketing of hogs. It ranked fifth in the state in 1954 with 6,086 head located on 714 farms. Swine were sold from only 260 farms indicating that a majority of the farms keep hogs for home meat consumption. Interest in the raising of hogs resulted in an increase to a high of 11,801 head in 1944 due to the wartime demands for pork. It then dropped off to 6,086 head in 1954, and has followed the general trend in western Washington of lower numbers of hogs and pigs raised for sale.

Reasons for the decline are related mainly to higher costs of feeding hogs. In earlier years many dairy farmers kept hogs to utilize skimmed-milk left from cream separating. In recent years nearly all milk has been shipped in whole-milk form. Many of the present farms specializing in hogs use garbage waste from cities, towns and institutions and purchase grain for finishing the animals for market. There has also been a decline in farm-butcherings of hogs and preparing home-cured ham and bacon.

Table 29.- Hogs, Sheep, Horses and Mules
King County, 1939-1954

Year	Hogs (head)	Sheep (head)	Horses and Mules (head)
1939	7,013	1,393	3,237
1944	11,801	2,252	3,040
1949	8,443	2,017	1,155
1954	6,086	3,463	1,602

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Horses

Horses and mules for farm-work and transportation have decreased in the last 30 years due to tractors, trucks and other machines. The Census found 4,350 horses in King County in 1920 compared to only 1,602 head in 1954. Most of the present horses are used for riding in the woodland areas near Seattle and in the mountain recreation areas of the Cascades. Rarely are teams of horses used for farm work or logging -- a commonplace sight before 1920. Among western Washington counties King is first in numbers of horses, indicating the popularity of horses for recreational riding in suburban districts where stables are operated. In 1954 there were 1,602 head, about 450 head more than in 1950, and horses and colts were being raised or kept on 785 farms. Only 64 farms made sales of horses and only 156 head were marketed.

Sheep

In contrast to a general trend in western Washington of decreasing interest in sheep raising, there has been a slight increase in King County. Since 1940 sheep have gone up from 1,393 head to 3,463. In 1939 there were only 100 farms keeping sheep, but by 1954 a total of 355 farms were reported. In western Washington, King is third behind Clark and Lewis Counties in sheep raising. Wool shorn in 1954 amounted to 20,000 pounds compared to 7,000 pounds in 1949. In 1954 about 2,000 sheep and lambs were sold from 144 farms for a value of about \$24,000. Sheep have become more popular as a sideline on farms in the uplands and mountain valleys. As a rule the flocks are small, averaging about 10 head per farm where raised. Further expansion of sheep raising in the mountain section is limited by such natural disadvantages as long, wet winters, heavily wooded ranges and predatory animals.

Goats, Rabbits and Fur Animals

The raising of goats is a specialized type of livestock farming found on 253 farms of King County. King led all other Washington counties in 1954 both

in number of goats with 1,104 head, and in number of farms keeping goats. Most goats are kept in flocks of less than 5 head, but in the Upper Snoqualmie Valley a few flocks of over 25 are kept for commercial sales of milk in the Seattle urban market. A goat milk dairy is operated near Auburn.

The Census of Agriculture, 1950, collected data in King County on rabbits and fur animal specialties which have interested a number of small-farm owners and part-time farmers. King County ranked first in the state in number of farms raising rabbits and fur animals. There were 694 farms keeping rabbits and 67 raising fur-bearing animals such as mink, chinchilla, muskrat and silver fox. Most of the rabbitries were in Seattle suburban districts. Most of those raised were for a fresh and frozen market. In 1950 there were 227 farms which sold goats, goat milk, fresh rabbits, fur bearing animals and fur pelts. Total sales amounted to \$201,750, highest of all Washington counties.

Bees and Honey

Bee keeping has shown an increase since 1920 and King County ranked fourth in the state in this specialty in the 1950 Census. In that Census year (the last one in which data on bees and honey were collected) 80 farms kept hives and 24 made commercial sales. About 73,000 pounds of honey were marketed off farms. In an average year honey sales approximate \$10,000. The honey is mainly from clover fields in the lower areas and from wild big-leaf maple and fireweed in the foothills and mountains.